Castlemaine Naturalist

April 2002

Vol. 26.3 #287

Antechinus

There are 10 members of the genus *Antechinus*, and a further 6 members of the subspecies, *Pseudantchinus.*

Local sightings are likely to be either the Yellow Footed, Agile or just *possibly* the Dusky Antechinus. The Agile Antechinus is very similar to the Brown Antechinus, and once was considered a race of the Brown, but it is slightly smaller and the fur is more greyish than brown.

<Agile Antechinus

The Agile has an average body length of 75mm, the Yellow-footed 110 mm. Weight average of the former is 16g, the latter 44g. The territory of the Agile is from southern New South Wales, adjacent to the coastal plains and down through south, central and eastern Victoria. It is replaced by the Yellow Footed Antechinus in the drier Box/Ironbark forest. The Yellow-footed is easily recognised because of its colouring which is grey on the head and back, lower back and rump tending to reddish fawn, yellow to buff paws and underbelly.

The Dusky Antechinus is a larger species, 75-170 g and its body length 75-120 mm. It is more frequently seen in south of Victoria although the territory has some pockets in central Victoria, generally in higher rainfall areas.

The behavior of the Yellow-footed Antechinus is mostly nocturnal, but can be abroad on an overcast day: It climbs rapidly, hunts vertebrates amongst the litter including that built up in fissures and tree hollows. Large nests of leaves and grass are built in tree hollows and hollow logs

[According to The Complete Book of Australian Mammals, "Its nervous and cheeky disposition makes it a welcome and amusing visitor but its tendencies to pilfer from the kitchen and to build nests inside television sets and lounge chairs sometimes make it a nuisance"! Ed.]

Antechinus species in general are mainly insectivorous, but some will take earthworms, young birds and small lizards and mammals. The Yellow-footed neatly turns the skin of its victim inside out as it rolls it down from the head as it eats. It is thought that some of the other Antichinuses do the same, but the habits of the Yellow-footed are better known because it cohabits with man at times.

Mating is synchronised over a two week period, mid to late August, after which all males die.

The Dusky Antechinus is totally territorial, part diurnal and nocturnal. It forages amongst the ground litter. The mating period and the death of the males is identical to the Yellow Footed Antechinus.

Common names	Scientific names
Yellow Footed	Antechinus flavipes
Agile	Antechinus agilis
Dusky	Antechinus swainsonii

Principal Reference: Mammals of Australia
Authors: Peter Menkhorst and Frank Knight
Additional references: Australian Mammals, Hyett and Shaw; Complete Book of Australian Mammals, Australian Museum, 1995, editor, Strahan.

John Turnbull

The Kalimna Quadrats

Six 10 x 10 m quadrats were set up, and the plants in the square were recorded.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Common Names
Acacia acinacea		1				+	Gold dust Wattle
Acacia aspera					+		Rough Wattle
* Acacia baileyana	+	2	1	2	1	1	Cootamundra Wattle
Acacia genistifolia	+		+	+			Spreading Wattle
Acacia pycnantha	+	2		1	+		Golden Wattle
* Aira sp.			+	+		+	Hair-grass sp.
Amyema preissii		1	1	1		1	Wire-leaf Mistletoe
Astroloma humifusum	+	+	+	+	+	+	Cranberry Heath
Austrodanthonia spp.	1	1		+	1	3	Wallaby Grass
Austrodanthonia setacea	+						Bristly Wallaby Grass
Austrostipa mollis	+	1		+	+	+	Soft Spear-grass
* Briza maxima	+	1	1	+	1		Shell Grass
* Briza minor				+			Shivery Grass

		1	2	3	4	5	6	Common Names
*	Bursaria spinosa	+	+	+	+			Sweet Bursaria
	Cassinia arcuata	3	3	1	1	5	3	Weeping Cassinia or Chinese Scrub
*	Centaurium sp.						+	Centaury
	Daviesia ulicifolia	+						Gorse Bitter Pea
	Dianella revoluta	+	+	1	+			Black-anther Flax-lily
	Eucalyptus goniocalyx	+	+	5	2			Long-leaf box
	Eucalyptus melliodora?		+					Yellow box
	Eucalyptus microcarpa	1	1					Grey Box
	Galium gaudichaudii	+			+			Rough Bedstraw
	Gonocarpus tetragynus	+	+		+	1	1	Common Raspwort
	Grevillea alpina	1						Downy Grevillea
	Hypericum gramineum					+		Small St. John's Wort
	Joycea pallida	+	+	1	1	+		Red Anther Wallaby-grass
	Juncus subsecundus					+	+	Finger Rush
	Leptorhynchos tenuifolius	+				+		Wiry Buttons
	Lomandra filiformis	+	+	+	+	+	1	Wattle Mat-rush
	Lomandra multiflora		+				1	Many-flowered Mat-rush
	Luzula meriodonalis			+		+		Wood Rush
	Ozothamnus obcordatus			+				Grey Everlasting
	Pimelea linifolia			+				Slender Riceflower
*	Pinus radiata					+		Monterey Pine
	Poa sp.	+	+	+	+	+	+	Grass
*	Romulea rosea						+	Common Onion Grass
	Senecio tenuiflorus			+	+			Purple-leaf Groundsel
	Stipa mollis	+						Spear Grass
	Thelymitra pauciflora						+	Slender Sunorchid
	Themeda australis					1	2	Kangaroo Grass
	Thysanotus patersonii	+	+			1		Twining Fringe-lily
*	Ulex europaeus					+		Gorse
	Wahlenbergia gracilenta				+			Sprawling Bluebell
	Wahlenbergia stricta	+						Tall Bluebell

* indicates a non-indigenous species; 5 is 75-100% cover, 4 is 50-75% cover, 3 is 25-50% cover, 2 is 5-24% cover, 1 is 1-5% cover, and + is less than 1% cover.

The quadrats were in pairs, the first outside the fence and the second inside. In each case, the fenceline made one side.
Block 1 and 2: NW corner, on the west fence.
Block 3 & 4: West fence 11 steel posts from the corner.
Block 5 & 6: East corner, 1 post south of the corner.
Dead shrubs and trees were not counted; dead annuals were counted where present.

This project is part of a long-term monitoring program. Repeating the surveys at a similar time of the year will give an indication of long-term changes. It is expected

that the number of plants, and % cover, would be greater in spring.

Ern Perkins

Mineral Springs Tour

Sunday, March 10 at Campaspe Downs saw a party of a couple of dozen Field Nats from various parts of the state lined up ready to take part in the great mineral spring water tasting. They were in residence in the camp and had elected to be led to a selection of the mineral springs of the area. There are believed to be something like 100 springs in the Central Goldfields area ranging from Taradale in the North to Ballan in the South. In one day it was planned to visit about 7 of them, those being chosen so that the trip would traverse typical Box-Ironbark in the North and Peppermint-Messmate forests in the South. The CFNC has done a similar trip a couple of times in the past, but this time the tour had to based on Campaspe Downs instead of Castlemaine.

I had wondered whether we could include the Stony Creek spring in the trip, so went out in the Gemini van to spy out the land. Just as well, as Hunters Track proved to be a veritable testing trip for 4WD's, so even although the Gemini managed miraculously to get through it was very obvious that Stony Creek would be best left unvisited on that tour. Nor would we visit the popular springs at Daylesford and Hepburn, these being best left to the many tourists who would be visiting the area over a long week-end.

From Campaspe Downs we headed North through Kyneton to the Kyneton springs on the Campaspe R, this was to be our yardstick (metrestick?) by which to compare all the other springs. The popularity of this spring was evidenced by the couple who were there when we arrived, busily filling their couple of dozen bottles. After Kyneton came the tough part; our route took us through Lauriston and on to the Vaughan road from which we turned off onto the Fryers Ridge road, which, although not nearly as bad as Hunters Track, would have been improved by a bit of grading. Here we stopped for a time in the flora reserve to examine the local flora, before continuing on towards Vaughan. A few days previously while out checking the route I had met a grader heading for the Irishtown Track, so expected that to be very good. Unfortunately the grader had concentrated on constructing drains across the road, which turned out to be not as smooth as I had hoped. However it was negotiated with no mishap other than a fallen tree which was completely blocking the road and required all hands to get out and pull.

After that it was a relief to arrive at Vaughan in time for morning tea, for which Phee had prepared a large batch of cheese scones which were much appreciated. Only the main spring at Vaughan could be sampled as the

Lawson spring was out of action and the others would have taken too much time, besides I had promised that there would be little walking and that there would be plentiful toilets, much needed after all that mineral water. From Vaughan we more or less followed the course of the Loddon upstream as we headed for Glenlyon springs. Glenluce had to be missed as the pump there is not working. At Glenlyon there was further disappointment because I had promised a high-tech spring where there would be no need to pump. However when we arrived we found the push-button pump was not functioning, but fortunately the hand operated one was, so another tasting was possible. After Glenlyon it was back onto the bitumen for the run into Daylesford which was bursting at the seams with tourists there for the long week-end. I was afraid that there might have been some activity at Tipperary springs but much to my relief, when we arrived, we found that the tourists were all concentrated elsewhere so that we had the place almost all to ourselves. This made a very pleasant place for lunch with the shade of the huge Manna Gum being very welcome by this time after a fairly cool start to the day.

Following lunch it was off back through Daylesford and on to Leitch's Creek which is located in a small neat reserve next to the creek. Here there are two springs, a lower one flowing constantly, and the upper one fitted with a hand pump. It was decided to rate these separately as the tasters felt that they differed significantly. Next stop was at Lyonville where the spring is set amidst tall Peppermints and Manna gums. In winter this is often a damp and shady spot where fungi are plentiful, not today however. Here, as at our other stops, several of the party were very interested in finding juvenile Eucalyptus leaves, having been with Ern Perkins the previous day on a Eucalyptus identification tour. There were plenty of juvenile leaves at the next and final stop as one side of the road had been clearfelled in the fairly recent past, so there was much regrowth. The last spring for the day was the Coliban spring, which strangely enough is situated in the bed of the Loddon, and is reached after a downhill stroll of about half a kilometre. Here some of the party were delighted to find a Hyacinth Orchid still in full bloom.

As this was the last spring for the day it was now time to collect the score-cards before heading back to Campaspe Downs, or for some people to head for the coffee-shop in Trentham. Phee and I had now to total up the marks given to the various springs so that the result could be announced during the evening after the dinner. After carefully totalling up the scores and rechecking the final result came in as follows. **Glenlyon** narrowly pipped **Tipperary** for first, while in eighth place was, believe it or not, **Vaughan.**

George Broadway

Observations

• Margaret Dunne has had small birds nesting for the first time in some Hedge Wattle, though they have been using the Hakeas for some years. This season they have only raised one brood, whereas in a good year they can raise as many as three broods.

• One member (sorry, I didn't hear the report, so haven't a name, and my scribe didn't get a name either - written reports are still the way to go for a deaf editor!) reported that 200 foxes were shot recently in Harcourt. Shooting is become less of an option as housing spreads through the area.

• There were two Black-shouldered Kites tumbling and locking talons, dropping to within five metres of the ground, breaking apart, climbing and repeating the performance over and over again above Moody's property at Redesdale. Craig was curious to know if this was aggressive behaviour between males, or courtship?

• Another note came from Gilbert Smith, which will, sadly, be his last report from the Colles Road property, as they are selling it, but he has sent his bird list from 13-14 March - and he says that he was only seriously birdwatching for about ½ hour, though he was on the property from 6pm 'til 11am next day. The list is: Willie Wagtail, Restless Flycatcher, Galah, corella, raven, Magpies, Choughs, Wattlebirds, Musk Lorikeets, Fuscous, Yellow-faced, Yellow-tufted and New Holland Honeyeaters, Eastern Spinebill, male Mistletoebird, Yellow-rumped thornbill, Red-capped Robin, Grey Shrike-thrush. Crimson and Eastern Rosellas, Blue Wrens, 3 Bronzewing Pigeons, Yellow Robin, Grey Fantail, 12 Dusky Woodswallows flying overhead, currawong and Kookaburra, and (Owlet?) Nightjars heard, White-browed Scrubwrens and Red-browed Finches are regularly seen on the block. at 11 am on the 14th three Wedgetailed Eagles were being harassed by a small hawk before they drifted down Happy Valley Road.

• Re Gil's question about Sugar Gliders being abroad during daylight hours, Ern Perkins received this note from Darren Bos, "As for the comment in the Field Naturalists Newsletter regarding the daylight sighting of a Sugar Glider, I asked my supervisor in Adelaide this question (she has done a lot of research, mostly on Yellow-bellied, but also on sugar) and this is what she replied:

• " ' Don't know of any instances of Sugar gliders being active during the day, but I guess its Possible in some curcumstances.'

"I was hoping for a little more detail, but, oh well.... I tried!" And it's nice to know that the Mount Alexander Shire Environmental Project Officer is taking an interest!

• On the way to Castlemaine Chris and Helen Morris went for a walk in the Daylesford area and spotted a Koala making its way along the track. A little further on they found a snake with a very black back and a yellow belly under a piece of corrugated iron. Possibly a Red-bellied Black Snake? The sides of the belly can be pink, orange or red in this species.

• George Broadway reported having had an excellent view of a Spotted Quail-thrush on the Poverty Gully track on 20/3. It actually flew up onto a low branch and stayed there, turning this way and that while he stood still

and watched. It eventually flew off, but was back as he returned half an hour later.

• Ern Perkins reported that the Boobook Owl was back on their television antenna this month.

• Shirley Parnaby reported that on one evening towards the end of March her bird bath was "full of Tasmanian Silvereyes". They were taking turns, perching on nearby twigs, and flying down to drink and bathe. There were only a few last year, and they arrived three weeks later.

• Between 5.30 and 5.45 pm, on 25/3 when storm clouds were gathering, Rita Mills stood outside the house in 118 Blakeley Road, (and out on the road!) watching a mixed flock of some 150 -200 White-throated Needletails and Forktailed Swifts swirling and floating overhead, like a swarm of huge flies. A pair of binoculars showed that there were millions of insects in the air above the trees in the yard.

FROM THE BUSINESS MEETING, 22/3/02

A **Gorse Field Day** is to be held at the George Archer Pavilion at the Soldiers' Memorial Park in Chewton on **Monday 8 April, starting at 9.30am** and going through to 12.30pm. Several groups will be represented - Golden Point Landcare, Mount Alexander Shire, including Darren Bos, NRE, Parks Victoria, NativFocus, etc., and subjects will include Gorse Spider Mite, Spraying, Native Plant Propagation and the Chewton Landcare Group proposal. There will be a question/discussion time, display of information, groomer demonstration, plants for sale and Gorse Spider Mite nursery. An electric BBQ facility is available, and of course, the Chewton General Store is nearby, if you'd like to conclude the morning with lunch at the park.

Margaret Lees, where are you? Margaret joined CFNC in February, but we have been unable to even send her a newsletter, because she didn't give us an address. Can anyone help? or, if Margaret happens to read this please send your address to the Club address, PO Box 324, Castlemaine.

Threatened Species Network. It has been confirmed that **CFNC is to do survey work for TSN** and the first was done on Wednesday, Mar 20. See Ern Perkins' article in this CN.

The **next survey** is to be on private land at **Taradale on Saturday April 6,** leaving from 27 Doveton Street at 8.30am. The creek on the property needs to be crossed by 4 WD or on foot. We will be crossing on foot, so keep that in mind as you prepare. Take binoculars, notebook, pen, etc., morning tea and lunch.

Later in the year survey work needs to be done on the Yapeen-Muckleford Road. Meanwhile, **Mount Alexander Shire and Guildford LandCare have placed 200 stakes** of the small variety with a hook near the top, (and need about another 50 or so) as markers.Guildford LandCare are looking after the weeding side of things and these will help identify the **Pimelea spinescens** plants.

Disclaimer - The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributor and not necessarily those of the club.

CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST, APRIL 2002

PROGRAM

General Meetings are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) hall, at 8.00pm on the second Friday of each month, except January.

Excursions leave promptly at times stated, usually on the Saturday after the general meeting. There are NO excursions on TOTAL FIRE BAN days. **Also note** that outdoor events are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions.

Business Meetings are held at 27 Doveton Street on the 4th Thursday of each month, except December, at 7.30pm. All members are invited to attend.

VISITORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME TO CLUB MEETINGS AND EXCURSIONS

Sat. April 6. Survey at Taradale. (confirmed) Leave **8.30 am** from 27 Doveton St. Bring binoculars, morning tea and lunch. Wear suitable clothing and sturdy footwear.

Mon. April 8. **Gorse Field Day at Chewton.** Soldiers Memorial Park, Chewton (George Archer Pavilion). 9.30 am - 12.30 pm. Speakers, demonstrations, morning tea. Enquiries, Marie Jones, 5472 2892. See p7

Tue. April 9 **Community River Health Forum** (NCCMA) Campbells Creek Community Centre 7pm. See pp. 8 and 9, CN 286.

Fri. April 12 - **Freeway Focus**. Frank Panter is the speaker. UCA hall at 8pm.

Sat April 13. **Highway Cleanup.** Meet at Taits' Carriages at 8.30 am. Details, see p8, CN286.

Sat. Apr. 13. **Sutton Grange**. Jock McRae's property . Leave CHIRP at 1.30pm or meet at Dainty Lane, Sutton Grange, at 2pm. There will be an inspection of the plantings, followed by afternoon tea (BYO). An optional walk afterwards to Jock's wetland, which will involve a 20 minute walk through the paddocks.

Thurs. April 25. **Birdwatching.** Start of joint program with U3A. Meet at the Octopus, opposite the Castle Motel at 8.30am. Bring binocs, a drink, snack if needed, a notepad or notebook, a birdbook if you have one, but there will be some available. Leader, Nigel Harland *If you have a spare pair of binocs, please bring them.*

Fri. May 10 **Bats.** the speaker is Lindy Lumsden of DNRE. UCA hall at 8pm.

Sat. May 11. **Ted Errey Walk, Brisbane Ranges.** All day excursion. The walk is approx. 10 kms, but there's plenty to do if you don't want to walk. Take morning and afternoon tea, lunch, wear sturdy footwear and suitable clothing. Leave 27 Doveton St. **at 9am.**

Fri. June 8 **Fungi, Mosses and Liverworts,** with Bruce Fuhrer, well known photographer/naturalist and author. UCA hall at 8pm. *To be confirmed.*

Sat. June 9 **Fungi** excursion to **Bullarto Res.** *or* a visit to the **Moody property,** depending on the availability of fungi. Leave Chirp, Mostyn at 1.30pm.

Fri. July 12 **Reptiles.** The speaker is Darren Green of Bendigo. UCA hall, 8pm Sat July 13, **Moody Property** or **Fungi at Bullarto Res**. - see June 9.

2002 Committee E. Perkins (President) ph 5472 3124, C. Morris (V.P. and Grievance Officer), G. Broadway (Sec.). ph. 5472 2513, H. van Gemert (treas.), R. Mills (N/L Ed. and P.O.), M. Badminton, G. Harris, B. Maund, M. Oliver, R. Piesse.

Subscriptions for 2002 Ordinary Membership: Single ,$22 Family, $30
Pensioner or student: Single $19 Family $24 Supporting: $31
The subscription also covers postage of the 'Castlemaine Naturalist'.

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club, P.O. Box 324, Castlemaine. 3450.
Incorporation # A0003010B